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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the literature on public school administration and on decentralization to establish the groundwork for an analysis of the administration of a decentralized school system and its media services, discusses some of the confusion in the centralization vs. decentralization debate, and presents a heuristic study of the administration of media services in the Atlanta Public School System. Although there are not enough data to establish models, graphic displays in a generalized form are used, and 39 references are listed. (Author/RAA)

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ADMINISTRATIVE DECENTRALIZATION IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND ITS EFFECT ON THE ORGANIZATION OF MEDIA SERVICES

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

The initial intent of this study was to investigate the possibility of constructing a model of a media services information network for a large, urban, decentralized public school system. In using the Atlanta Public School System as a basis of analysis, I discovered that the literature that exists on public school administration does not use the Southern traditions as models. Furthermore, the state of the art of understanding decentralized school administration was infantile, and with respects to media services, practically non-existent.

What I have therefore attempted to do is describe the literature to establish the groundwork for analysis of an administrative structure for a school system; indicate the literature on decentralization; discuss some of the confusion in the centralization vs. decentralization debate; and present a heuristic study of the Atlanta Public School System's media services network. Although there is not enough data presented to establish models, wherever useful I have attempted to graphically display in a generalized form my organization of information.

The number of people who have aided me through their patience in explaining the operation of their school, media center, department, or job is considerable. In particular I wish to thank the members of the Media Leadership Team: Dr. Gilbert Tauffner, Director, Learning Resources Department; Mrs. Vi Patrick, Resource Librarian, Learning Resources Department; Mrs. Bertha Patmon, Coordinator, Media Selection Services; the four Area Resource Librarians: Mrs. Barbara Cade, Mrs. Ruby Gray, Mr. Willis Bolton,

and Mrs. Margaret Fife; and most of all, Mrs. Dorothy Blake, Coordinator of Planning for System Media Resources and Utilization. Without Mrs. Blake's assistance in introducing me to the system, and the highly cooperative and helpful staff working for it, this study could not have been done. When I reached dead ends, she could usually indicate who in the system or what document (many of which were system communications of which otherwise I could not know) might give me the information I was seeking.

People who are closely associated with the Atlanta School System may not always recognize some of the job titles as they are described in this study. If there is any aspect of the Atlanta Public School System which does not change, it is the inconsistency of a job title. Any one of which might be listed more than one way in the same house document. I have attempted to be consistent in this paper rather than being accurate to any single source.

DECENTRALIZATION: POLITICAL AND STRUCTURAL PROCESSES

In the 1970's with the trend in large municipal school systems to consider decentralization, the separation of structural organization from political control is often difficult and yet necessary. However this is not the case for most of the history of the American school. Indeed, part of the argument for decentralization of urban schools is linked to the return to the non-centralized prototype of public education--the single school school district.

Although there are laws which were passed in Massachusetts in the seventeenth century providing for public organization of schools, public education did not become organized as systems until the nineteenth century. During this period the pattern was set for the prototype American public school.[1] The basic attendance area of the school was the local community district, and the school itself would most probably be a single room elementary school. The local community would have made the decision to establish the school, levy the taxes to support it, and create a process of accountability without external coercion. But the decision to provide public education or not was still in the control of the local community.

This local school was both centralized and decentralized in operation: that is, resources, services, support (whatever were available) were centrally managed and disseminated, yet policy, procedures, implementation, and control were local considerations. Perhaps this example is meaningless

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[1]The basic information concerning the reconstruction of the prototype American school is taken from Roald F. Campbell, Luvern L. Cunningham, and Roderick F. McPhee, The Organization and Control of American Schools (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Books, 1965) pp. 8-11; 80-109. An earlier thorough history of the school would be R. Freeman Butts and Lawrence A. Cremin, A History of Education in American Culture (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953)

since we are dealing with a singularity where centralization and decentralization become one. But since much of the core argument for decentralization implies a return to the local school, it is important to see the centralized elements in that local school and to note the development of those elements.

The basic unit of control for this prototype school was the primary governmental unit for the community or a committee of that government. In New England this meant the town meeting, the board of selectmen, or a committee of selectmen.[2] The control of education was not yet differentiated from the control of any other town business. Under the early ordinances, systems were set up to support the schools, define the education, establish town taxes, select teachers and determine their wages.[3] It was not until the late 18th. and early 19th. centuries did we see the beginning of the differentiation of control on any scale. It was with the development of the school committee, school trustees, board of school directors--the board of education--that the school structure, organization, and control began to develop its own shape from the other responsibilities of local government.

Although this prototype school is basically the prototype school district for the United States, the governmental unit is not accurate for southern states. The southern states, developing out of a Church of England

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[2]Henry Suzzallo, The Rise of Local School Supervision in Massachusetts (Teachers College Contribution No. 3 [New York: Columbia University, 1906]) as reported in Campbell, et. al., p. 8.

[3]Charles Everand Reeves, School Boards, Their Status, Functions, and Activities (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954), p.17

parish system, have the county as the primary governmental unit as opposed to the town.[4] And although the Civil War greatly retarded the impact of the common school revival in the south,[5] which has left it educationally impoverished well into the twentieth century, the county government's historical link with school districts has tended to make the consolidated and centralized development somewhat more simplified, regular, and clearer in structure than its counterparts in other parts of the United States.

One fact cannot be stressed too strongly--in all forms, and in almost all aspects, public education is based on a prototype of lay control. The certification of teachers for the prototype schools was a process of government, not delegated to administrative officers. Even today the certification process, as well as the hiring of teachers, although using the recommendation of schools of educations in the case of certification, or the recommendation of administrative officers in the case of hiring, is reserved for a lay government.[6] To summarize the organization of the prototype school, it is a unit defined, created, funded, locally under direct lay control.

It is not the purpose of this study to attempt to deal with the limitations of this prototype school. It is important to understand the foundations for the structures and demands placed upon those structures in education today.

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[4]George R. La Noue and Bruce L. R. Smith, The Politics of School Decentralization (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1973), p. 11.

[5]John D. Pulliam, History of Education in America (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1968), pp. 62-63. This is not to imply that the Civil War was the only major factor in the inhibited development of public education in the south.

[6]For certification history, see Edwin Grant Dexter, History of Education in the United States (New York: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 15-16 and for role of the board with regard to mandatory powers, see Robert R. Hamilton and E. Edmund Reutter, Jr., Legal Aspects of School Board Operation (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1958), chapter 4.

The end product of the Colonial New England development of education was the district system. As summarized by Butts and Cremin:

> ...by the end of the eighteenth century the legislatures were delegating to the local districts themselves full power to conduct and control schools. Thus arose the "district system" of school control, the ultimate in decentralization of educational administration. Districts were now authorized to establish and maintain a school, to build the school house, appoint a teacher, determine the curriculum and the length of the school year, and provide whatever funds they thought necessary.
>
> As the frontier swept further westward in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the district system of administration of schools went along and eventually covered most of America.[7]

Although the structure and the organization, along with the tenor and scale have shifted over the past one hundred and fifty years, we can still observe the tenacity of this model. John Pulliam states that as late as "just after the First World War, about 70% of the public school buildings in the nation were of the one-room variety."[8] In 1940 there were some 110,000 separate school districts.[9] Although there has been waves of centralization and consolidation philosophy and the number of districts have declined to 17,238 in 1972, the historic structures are still apparent in the individual states. The following sampling of states will show the dramatic difference between the southern states organized on a county structure as opposed to those states with districts developing from town structure. (The data on the following table are from the year 1972 and include as districts independent school systems).[10]

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[7] op. cit., p. 104.

[8] op. cit., p. 84.

[9] La Noue and Smith, op. cit., p. 11.

[10] Statistical Abstract of the United States (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 257.

STATE	NUMBER OF DISTINCT DISTRICTS
Connecticut	169
Illinois	1,177
Massachusetts	373
Nebraska	1,374
New Hampshire	167
Georgia	189
Maryland	33
South Carolina	93

As stated before, the Southern colonies did not develop politically on the town structure as did New England. Furthermore, in the colonies where the educational and governmental models were developed, the episcopal system of church control had placed almost complete control for public and private schools in the hands of the bishop. The essentially congregationalist structure to organization of religion in the New England colonies was a primary factor in the development of local control to government. The only area of education in which the civil government exercised control in the south was over apprenticeship, and the education of indigent, orphaned and illegitimate children.

Virginia established laws governing the apprenticeship system and on a limited basis provided for the establishment of parish schools during the 17th. century. None of this development, however was systematic or enforced by state authority.

> Occasionally, the parish minister taught a school for the children of his parish, charging fees for the parents who could pay and sometimes teaching poor children for nothing. Only rarely did a parish build a school building or pay tuition for parish poor in a private school. Somewhat more common was the practice of asking parish and county officials to act as trustees or guardians for endowments to be administered in establishing and conducting endowed private schools. But here again only nine or ten such schools were established in Virginia in the whole colonial period and only seven of the ninety parishes had such schools. Poor

children were given free instruction in these schools, and at least some of them admitted girls.[11]

Maryland envisioned a more thorough and systematic approach to education by establishing a quasi-public corporation made up of high government and church officials to oversee the funding, governance and policy of latin grammar schools to be established one per county. These schools were to conform to English models, that is free to poor children only, and conform to the laws of England, Maryland, and the Church of England. An act of 1723 decentralized this concept to include "county boards of visitors" to supervise these free schools. Land was provided for the support of these schools and public money was to be provided for the pay of the teacher. South Carolina also followed this pattern by enacting laws which authorized counties to establish schools and levy taxes for their support.

But throughout the South, little came of these attempts at public education. The eighteenth century was dominated by privately endowed schools governed by private boards under authority of a charter. It should be remembered that this prototype of the later distinctly American system of education appearing in the nineteenth century as elementary, secondary, and higher education, was still a structure operating within a dual track of educational opportunity. For the upper classes there were the latin grammar type of secondary education leading to college; for the lower classes there were elementary and apprenticeship education. The prototype public school in the northeast developed into an intermediate education adapting the patterns of the private English school and later the academy to the public elementary structures. The south, with little successful

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[11] Butts and Cremin, op. cit., p. 106

experience of public school development, continued the dual track education much longer.

Nevertheless, the southern models did develop a tradition of state control over the schools, however this control was seen as centralized by the larger legislative and governmental agencies as opposed to the roles of these agencies insuring that the local agencies perform their appropriate roles as in the New England laws. By the Revolutionary War, most of the models of law and patterns of control had been outlined. When the first state constitutions were framed, other than Pennsylvania, the only two states to include public education in their drafts were southern states--North Carolina and Georgia. Georgia's Constitution of 1777 states:

> Schools shall be erected in each county, and supported at the general expense of the State, as the Legislature shall hereafter point out.[12]

The effectiveness of the local, town-supported and controlled school for its primary aim of elementary education, regardless of other factors, appears to have been more successful than its southern counterparts. Richard Morris reports that "statistical evidence points to a higher degree of literacy in New England than elsewhere (1640-1700, 95% literacy /Shipton/ as against 54%-60% for males in Va./Bruce/."[13]

During the nineteenth century the basic shape of the American school system developed though the primary patterns of governance did not change. With the development of specialized roles of principal, superintendent, and clearer definition of boards of education, the considerations of primary control of the school did not begin to shift, with the exception of the cities, until the twentieth century.

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[12] Ibid., p. 108.

[13] Richard B. Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History, Bicentennial Edition (New York: Harper-Row, 1976), p. 833.

The nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century has been the time of the development of the intermediate school unit. As pointed out in the South, with the exception of the urban situations, the issue of an intermediate school unit does not apply. The county board of education is the basic operating unit of school governance, as opposed to the twenty-six states, mainly in the Midwest and West, which have coterminous intermediate school units and county boundaries. The history of the development of these intermediate units have been examined in some detail by Cooper and Fitzwater.[14] Their conclusions have been summarized as follows: [15]

> 1. There has been a growing recognition of education as a state function and the need for a workable number of intermediate offices to facilitate communication between the state and a great number of local school districts.
> 2. In the early stages the intermediate unit was seen essentially as an extension of the arm of the state department of education.
> 3. Over the years, there has been a gradual transfer of the functions of the intermediate office from a lay board to a professional or semi-professional officer.
> 4. Progress toward making the intermediate office more than a perfunctory one has been slow, for people resisted any encroachments upon their exercise of control of education at the local district level.
> 5. In recent years, the intermediate unit has come to be viewed by many people as an agency to provide to small local school districts services which they cannot ordinarily provide for themselves.

Most of the southern states fall within the twenty-three states which have no intermediate units of school administration. For the most part in the South, the state governments have directly fulfilled the roles that the intermediate units have played in other parts of the country, such as film libraries, funding for special services as counseling, special education, and supervisory roles.

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[14] Shirley Cooper and Charles O. Fitzwater, County School Administration (New York: Harper & Row, 1954)

[15] Campbell, et. al., op. cit., pp. 113-114.

The following table from Campbell, Cunningham and McPhee will give some idea of the variety of types of intermediate units operating during the mid-sixties.[16]

ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN TWENTY-SEVEN STATES WITH INTERMEDIATE UNITS, 1964

State	*Status of Board*	*Selection of Superintendent*
Arizona	None	elected
Arkansas	elected board	appointed
California	elected board	elected[1]
Colorado	None	elected
Illinois	elected board	elected
Indiana	elected board	appointed
Iowa	elected board	appointed[2]
Kansas	None	elected
Michigan	elected board[3]	appointed
Minnesota	None	elected[4]
Mississippi	elected board	elected
Missouri	elected board	elected
Montana	None	elected
Nebraska	None	elected
New Jersey	None[5]	appointed[6]
New York	elected board[3]	appointed
North Dakota	None	elected
Ohio	elected board	appointed
Oklahoma	None	elected
Oregon	elected board	appointed
Pennsylvania	elected board[7]	appointed
South Carolina	appointed board[8]	elected[8]
South Dakota	elected board	elected
Texas	elected board	elected[9]
Washington	None[10]	elected
Wisconsin	None	elected
Wyoming	None	elected

[1]Appointed in five counties.
[2]Iowa has 99 county boards and 85 county superintendents, 12 of whom serve more than one county.
[3]By representatives of local school districts. In Michigan optional provisions exist for election at large.
[4]The county school office has been abolished in 41 counties; functions are performed by county school administrators.
[5]County superintendent works with several special purpose boards.
[6]By the State Commissioner of Education.
[7]Must be elected from among local district board members.
[8]In South Carolina, many organizations exist. In 24 of the 46 counties there is but one school district. Thirty-five of the county boards are appointed by a county legislative delegation and 35 of the county superintendents are elected.
[9]Elected in 148 of 254 counties, appointed in 4 counties, county judge serves ex officio in 94 counties, no provision in 4 counties, and 4 counties are basic operating districts.
[10]There is a county committee for district reorganization.
NOTE: The help of Robert M. Isenberg in compiling some of these data is acknowledged.

[16] op. cit., p. 115

Since 1800, there has been a growing understanding of the primary and direct responsibility of the state government for public education. Furthermore, this responsibility also has had attached control and implementation. The roots of the American educational system has rather been the reverse--the state allowing or instructing the local town to provide education for its population. Certainly the goals and the product expected from the schools have shifted dramatically during the past century; the concept of education has entered the world of big business. To deal with the increased demands for resources and educational opportunity, the process of cooperation through unions of districts were begun in New England, and consolidation of districts were begun in other parts of the country. Always some level of control had to be relinquished in this centralization process. In the urban areas this process was magnified by the creation of elaborate hierachies within administrative organization. As curricula altered and grew in in size, the minimun size of a school which could offer the "most up-to-date" outline of courses also grew. But the myth of local control, and to an amazing extent the reality of local political power has not diminished.

The 1960's, a period when there was enormous headway made in integrating school systems, in attempting to insure equality of educational opportunity, and in re-vitalizing the concept of community control of politics, was also a period for the analysis of current centralized state of education. The number of students in the school systems had been growing a dramatic rate. The following chart will give some indication of the rates of growth during the twentieth century. However comparing this table with the previous

ENROLLMENT IN THOUSANDS [14]

TYPE OF SCHOOL	1940		1950		1960		1970	
	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private	Public	Private
Kindergarten	595	57	1023	133	1923	354	2601	200
Elementary (Gr. 1-8)	18350	2096	18457	2575	25356	4286	30190	4000
Secondary (Gr. 9-12)	6672	458	5781	672	8565	1035	13118	1300

RATE OF GROWTH IN ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

TYPE OF SCHOOL	1940-1950	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1974
Kindergarten	72%	88%	35%	2%
Elementary (Gr. 1-8)	.6%	37%	19%	-4%
Secondary (Gr. 9-12)	-13%	48%	53%	8%

[14]These two tables were constructed from Statistical Abstract of the United States, op. cit., Table No. 182, p. 115.

information cited concerning the decrease in the number of school district, the enormous effects of the pressure for centralization is readily apparent.

The other set of pressures toward centralization are the same set of pressures which led to centralization in the full arena of public services--the turn of the century progressive movement to remove politics from the operation of public services. Indeed this may have eliminated "political" power and party control of services, but it replaced this form of control with bureaucratic structures as distant and unresponsive. By the 1960's the same forces which created the centralized systems were now crying for a return to a political structure on a local level, for community control. This demand was often made without regard to the problems of operating requirements of scale.

The literature of decentralization is an integral mix of reform politics, social action, and structural implications. Very little of this literature has much consideration of educational management or the problems of delivery and funding of instructional services. The primary case studies which are the bulk of the literature relate to New York City, although there is some study of St. Louis, Los Angeles, Detroit and Washington, D. C. Of the ten largest cities in the United States, by 1960 all but Cleveland, Houston, and Baltimore had some form of structural decentralization.[18] But the cry for political decentralization was to find its time in the late sixties.

La Noue and Smith[19] attempted to test a series of hypotheses relating

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[18] La Noue and Smith, op. cit., p. 29

[19] Ibid.

Summary of Correlation Coefficients of Hypothesis Relating Demographic and Political Variables to School Decentralization

Hypotheses	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient
1. The larger the city the more likely decentralization.	.57
2. The faster the relative growth of the city the less likely decentralization.	.18
3. The larger the public school enrollment the more likely decentralization.	.59
4. The faster the relative growth of the public school enrollment the less likely decentralization.	−.16
5. The larger the absolute number of non-whites in the city the more likely decentralization.	.69
6. The higher the percentage of non-whites in the city the more likely decentralization.	.23
7. The larger the relative growth of non-whites in the city the more likely decentralization.	.16
8. The larger the absolute number of non-white students in the public school system the more likely decentralization.	.65
9. The larger the relative number of non-white students in the public school system the more likely decentralization.	.32
10. The higher the number of Negro teachers, the less likely decentralization.	−.66
11. The higher the percentage of Negro teachers, the less likely decentralization.	−.20
12. The more integration of black students the less likely decentralization.	.01
13. The more integrated the black teachers the less likely decentralization.	.08
14. The more the city schools are integrated overall the less likely decentralization.	.04
15. In school systems with 20 percent black students or more, the greater the integration the less likely decentralization.	.18
16. The greater the residential segregation in 1960 the more likely decentralization.	−.26
17. The more progress a city made in residential desegregation between 1940 and 1960, the less likely decentralization.	−.36
18. The higher the alienation toward the system (dropout rates among all students) the more likely decentralization.	−.23
19. The higher the alienation toward the system (dropout rate among non-whites) the more likely decentralization.	−.28
20. The greater the alienation toward the system (the difference in dropout rates between whites and non-whites) the more likely decentralization.	−.06
21. The higher the alienation toward the system (vandalism rates), the more likely decentralization.	−.01
22. The greater the representation of blacks on the city council, the more likely decentralization.	.15
23. Cities with elected school boards are less likely to have decentralization.	.17
24. Cities with boards elected by wards are less likely to have decentralization than cities with at-large boards.	−.13
25. School systems that are fiscally dependent are less likely to be decentralized.	−.11

to political and demographic variables with respect of school decentralization. The summary of correlation on the table below helps sketch out some of the characteristics of the decentralized urban system. About the only factor which seems to relate decentralized school systems is size. Absolute size of non-white populations are much more important than relative size of non-white to white. Other factors such as degree of school integration (faculty or student), alienation of students to education (using vandalism and drop-out rates as indicators, or political characteristics seem to have little relationship to school decentralization.

This was an aggregate study, and it might not represent any single system. Nevertheless it does bring to question many of the statements made in the political science literature with regard to the pressure to decentralize government.

One of the approaches to structural decentralization in the urban school systems is the division of the system into local areas. Baltimore, Boston, Atlanta, San Antonio, Houston, and New Orleans have systems with area administrators. The primary purpose of this work is to examine the operation of the Atlanta Public School System, in light of the background pressures which have been outlined in this chapter, and to describe to what extent the operation as a decentralized system has effect on its delivery of school media to the learning interface. Furthermore, there will an attempt to outline the operation of the system of media access and utilization, that it will provide a model to better understand the interrelationships of the individual elements. Finally, there will be a projection of some of the problems which will have to be addressed during this period of decreased enrollment and contracting financial support.

ATLANTA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DECENTRALIZATION

The Atlanta Public School System is comprised of 135 primary, elementary, middle, and high schools. It is the second largest school system in the state of Georgia with an average daily attendance of 74,547 pupils. (DeKalb County School System, an adjacent metropolitan Atlanta system, has an average daily attendance of 79,194).[20]

The schools range in size from an average daily attendance of 143 to 1,974 pupils. There are 105 primary and elementary schools with a total average daily attendance of 43,953 and an average school size of 419 pupils. The eight middle schools average 711 pupils per school and a total average daily attendance of 5,688. The twenty-two high schools average 1,110 pupils per school and a total average daily attendance of 24,419. Two-thirds of all the schools fall into the 300-900 pupil size school.[21] A summary table of changes in attendance and enrollment would be as follows:

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE [22]

	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
	1971	1977	1971	1977	1971	1977
Number of Schools	121	105	4	8	25	22
Attend. by type	61,330	43,953	2,690	5,688	27,865	24,419
Smallest school	--	143	--	402	--	650
Largest school	--	949	--	799	--	1,974
Mean size	507	419	672	711	1,115	1,110

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[20] Atlanta Public Schools, Statistical Report for School Year 1976-1977 (Atlanta, Georgia: Atlanta Public Schools, 1977), p. 20

[21] Ibid., computed from table on p. 20.

[22] Ibid., addapted from pp. 9-12

STUDENT ENROLLMENT[23]

Grades	1967	1970	1974	1977
K-7	80,906	77,496	61,797	54,811
8-12	37,412	38,275	33,094	33,109
Total	118,318	115,771	94,891	87,920

PER CENT DECREASE IN ENROLLMENT

Grades	1967-70	1970-74	1974-77	1967-1970
K-7	4.2%	20.2%	11.3%	32.2%
8-12	2.3%	13.5%	0.0%	11.5%
Total	2.2%	18.0%	7.3%	25.7%

These tables give a presentation of the motion of Atlanta Public Schools in the past 10 years. It has been a contracting system, roughly losing 1/4 of its enrollment in that time span. It serves a population base of 500,000 people spread unevenly over a geographical area of 126 square miles. It must meet the needs of highly urban to suburban communities with decreasing tax base in a greater metropolitan area which is one of the fastest growing in the nation. The school system is a municipal system which is separate from the county systems which surround it. It is physically located in the jurisdiction of parts of Fulton County and De Kalb County. It shares some services with Fulton County, most notably educational broadcasting with the school system operated stations WABE FM radio and WETV television. The following map will perhaps give a clearer definition to the location and boundaries of this system.[24]

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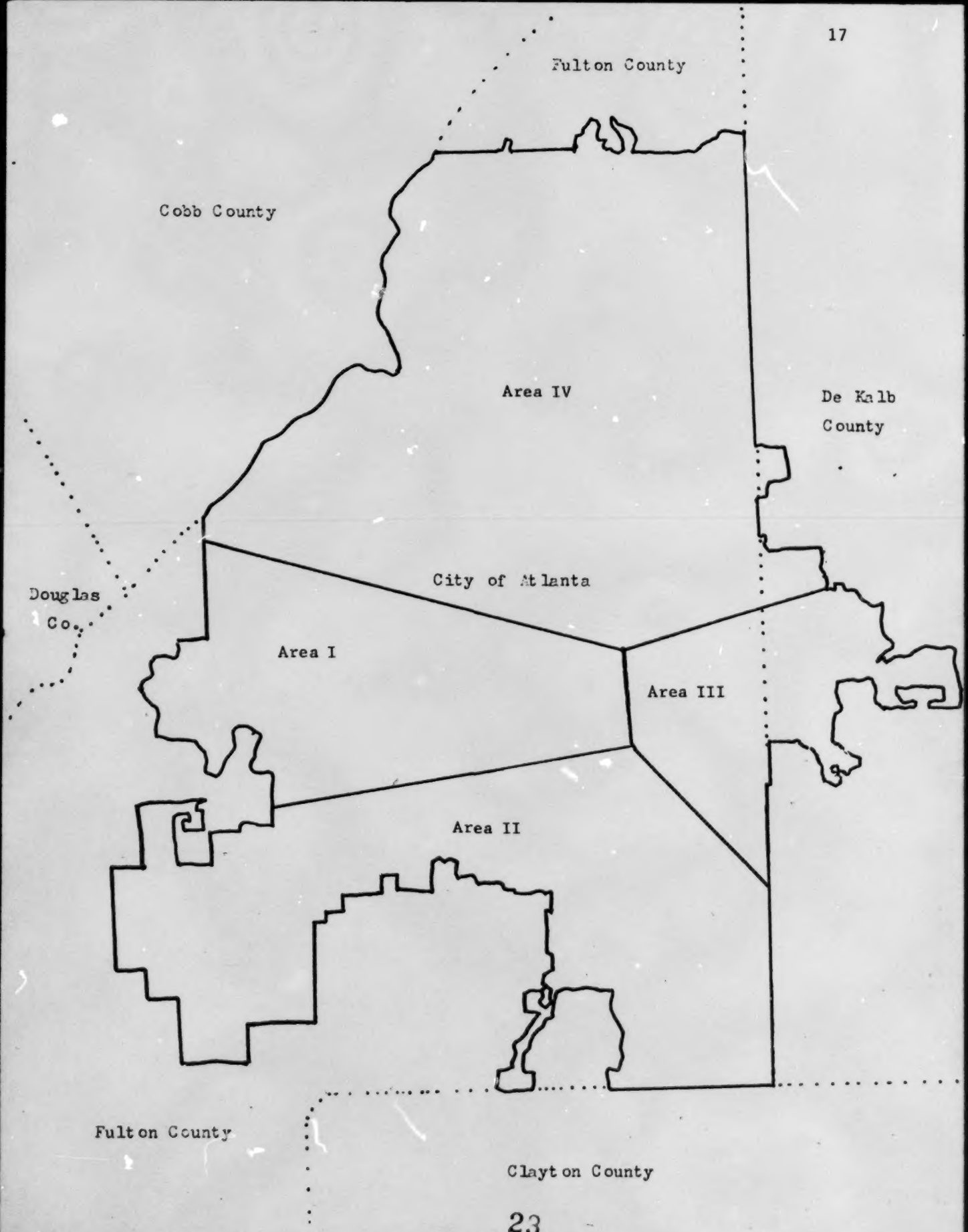
[23] Ibid., p. 21

[24] The Area division lines are mine. However the Areas refer only to schools, not to attendance areas, districts, or the like. This is only to give some idea of where the schools are located.


Fulton County
Cobb County
Area IV
De Kalb
County
City of Atlanta
Douglas
Co.
Area I
Area III
Area II
Fulton County
Clayton County

To present Atlanta Public Schools decentralized administration, it is necessary to define some terms relating to decentralization. Allan C. Ornstein has presented some definitions to a few of the terms in the decentralization discussion which have been the culprits of much confusion:

> Administrative decentralization: The locus of political power remains with the single, central administration and board of education. The system is broken into administrative or smaller units, and sometimes these units are further subdivided. By breaking down the system, in theory, the administration is brought closer to the schools and community, and there is closer communication between the schools and central office. The decentralized field administrators, such as the district or area superintendents and school principals, attain the power to make some decision which were formerly made at the central office. Accountability is still directed upward, not toward the community.
>
> Community participation: Community participation usually results in the formation of advisory committees...comprising various combinations of representatives of parents, community residents without children attending the public schools, teachers, administrators, students, local business, political, religious, and social agencies. Committee members are usually appointed by the school principal, if the committee is operating on the school level, or by the field administrator and/or central office administrator, if the committee is operating on the decentralized or central level...it does not transfer decision-making authority to that community.
>
> Community control: Carried to the fullest extent, it means decision-making power by the community (or so-called representatives from the community) over personnel (hiring, firing, and promoting), curriculum (course electives, ordering textbooks), student policy (student-teacher relations, discipline, testing and evaluation), and financing (federal funding, allocation of money, even determination of the budget).[25]

Dr. Sidney H. Estes, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Planning and development for the Atlanta Public Schools points out that "Atlanta's organizational structure is ...'<u>administratively</u> decentralized,' as there is some difference between administrative decentralization and the kind

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[25] Allan C. Ornstein, <u>Metropolitan Schools: Administrative Decentralization vs. Community Control</u> (Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974) pp. ix-xi.

of decentralization that has occurred to a much more extensive degree in New York City and Detroit, Michigan. Atlanta's school areas do not have an independent or autonomous Board of Education that operates in conjunction with the administration of each area in relation to personnel, budget, or curriculum matters."[26]

Gordon Cawelti, Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, performed a survey of fifty of the largest school systems in the United States with regard to the decentralized status of the schools.[27] Basically, the description of the types of decentralization were taken from Ornstein.[28] The following table,[29] summarizing some of the results of this survey, gives an overview of where Atlanta falls in terms of similar cities with respect to decentralization.

One of the most interesting facts which is obvious in this comparison is how early the decentralization process took place in New Orleans and Atlanta. One of the first factors which might be considered to account for this would be the pressure to desegregate from the courts. However an examination of School Board minutes and the summary history of the period by Melvin W. Ecke[30] indicates that although these were two major concerns

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[26]Sidney H. Estes, "Decentralization: Origin and Effect in Atlanta," in I. Ezra Staples, ed., Impact of Decentralization on Curriculum: Selected Viewpoints (Washington, D. C.: A.S.C.D., 1975), p. 35.

[27]Gordon Cawelti, "Urban School Decentralization and Curriculum Development Strategies," in Staples, op. cit., pp. 18-27.

[28]Ornstein, op. cit., also see his "Administrative/Community Organization of Metropolitan Schools," Phi Delta Kappan 54(1973), 668-74

[29]Cawelti, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

[30]Melvin W. Ecke, From Ivy Street To Kennedy Center; Centennial History of the Atlanta Public School System (Atlanta, Ga.: Atlanta Public Schools, 1972), Chapter IV, "The Ira Jarrell Years," pp. 273-358.

	City	Enrollment	Schools	Area (A), Region (R), District (D)	Year
A. Decentralization with regional offices and regional "school boards" with policy making authority.	New York City	1,106,000	950	32D	69
	Detroit	260,000	320	8R	71
B. Decentralization with regional office and regional committee acting in advisory capacity (appointed by the central board or chosen through a mechanism set by the board).	Portland	63,633	121	3A	70
	Chicago	500,000	561	3A, 27D	68
C. Decentralization with regional offices but not having regional "school boards."	Philadelphia	276,000	285	8D	•
	New Orleans	95,719	135	4A	54
	Atlanta	86,000	144	4A	56
	Dade County	240,000	235	6A	65
	Nashville	85,000	136	3D	66
	Indianapolis	92,000	125	3R, 10A	69
	San Antonio	73,000	97	3A	69
	Pittsburgh	70,000	152	3A	69
	Seattle	69,025	130	2R	69
	St. Louis	93,000	140	5D	70
	Los Angeles	727,681	662	4 Zones, 12A	71
	Houston	213,000	225	6A	71
	Oakland	55,000	91	3R	71
	Memphis	139,115	168	4A	71
	San Francisco	76,000	135	7 Zones	71
	El Paso	62,580	62	3A	72
	Greenville	57,000	96	5A	72
	Minneapolis	59,000	86	3A	73
	Cincinnati	79,000	102	4 el.D/2 sec.	73
	Baltimore	184,000	204	9R	73
	Washington, D.C.	130,000	190	6R	74
D. Decentralization but not reporting area or regional offices or "school boards."	Louisville	44,675	67	—	70

E. Districts reporting not to have regional, area, or district offices or school boards.

Wichita, Denver, Columbus, San Diego, Jacksonville, Toledo, Tucson, Long Beach, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, Norfolk, Phoenix, Boston, Fort Worth, Tulsa, Omaha, Oklahoma City, Kansas City, Cleveland. (Dallas has regional service offices for elementary schools; Milwaukee has a "cluster" plan.)

Number adopting prior to 1960 = 3
Number adopting 1960–1964 = 0
Number adopting 1965–1969 = 8
Number adopting 1970–1974 = 15

• Many years ago.

Nature of Administrative Organizations Reported

of the system at the same time, they were not causally related. The best indication that this is true is that the proposal for decentralization still made provision for a separate dual (white and negro) structure. The primary reason for decentralization appears to be in keeping with the La Noue and Smith findings--size. The report of the study recommending decentralization states as much:

> The Atlanta School System's most critical organizational problem arises from its sheer size. This System serves a population of 500,000 persons spread out in a number of different neighborhoods and communities over a geographical area of 126 square miles. It has approximately 100,000 pupils, more than 3,000 teachers, and 129 principals. It is almost impossible for a small centralized administrative staff to stay in direct contact with the problems of this many people and provide the necessary professional leadership and competence to assure that the educational goals are achieved thoughout the city. The Study Council therefore recommends that the School System be divided into not fewer than five geographical areas for administrative purposes. Each area, insofar as possible, should ...contain 20 to 30 schools. This is about the maximum number than any one person can direct.[31]

Atlanta Public School System, as a separate municipal school system, had been operating prior to this reorganization in much the same way as an individual county system in the State of Georgia. That is, with respect to the historical descriptions presented earlier, as a single school district with a single central office (disregarding the dual racial sets of schools and services below the central level). In March of 1955, the Atlanta Board of Education appointed Dr. John E. Ivey, Jr., Director of the Southern Regional Education Board, to chair and choose members of an independent study council to investigate approaches to improve the System. The other members of this Atlanta School Study Council were: Dr. Walter A. Anderson, Chairman of the Department of Administration and Supervision, School of Education, New York University; Dr. Daniel R. Davies, Executive

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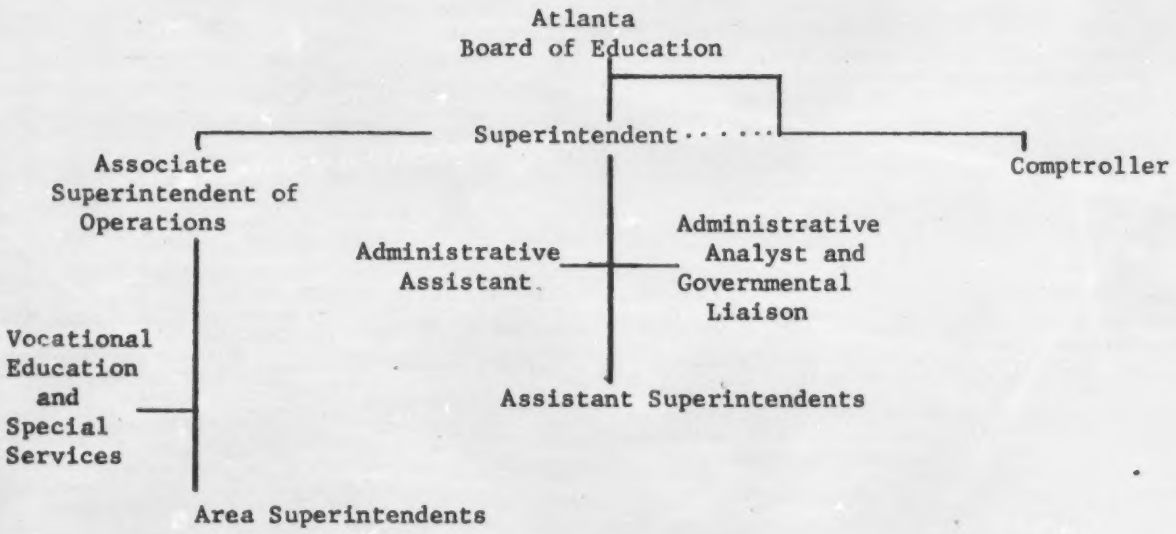
[31]Atlanta School Study Council, Schools for Atlanta's Future (Atlanta, Ga.: Atlanta Public Schools, December 1955), pp. 32, 34

Officer of the Division of Administration and Guidance, Teachers College, Columbia University; Dr. John H. Fischer, Superintendent of Schools in Baltimore, Maryland; Dr. R. L. Johns, Professor of School Administration, University of Florida; and Dr. Herold Hunt, who resigned from the Council to accept appointment as Under Secretary of the U. S. Department of Health, Education. and Welfare. Dr. John K. Folger, Director of Research for the Southern Regional Council, served as Coordinator of Studies for the Council.

Following the completion of their report, it was submitted to a Citizens' Advisory Committee for review. This committee was made of prominent Atlantan citizens. The final report covered all aspects of the system, however for the purposes of this study, the major interest is only with the reorganization plan. The basic structure of this plan was implemented in 1956 with the establishment of five Areas and respective Area Superintendents. Basically this is the same structure operating at the present with only one major change, the reduction of the areas from five to four during the 972-73 school year due to loss of enrollment. This is primarily true as regards to administrative components, however what has not been implemented in the original plan was the community advisory components on all levels. Perhaps this was the most forward looking aspects of the Report; in any event, it never has been realized.

Rather than attempting to show the regroupings and label changes which have taken place since 1956, I will present the current administrative organization and proceed to indicate the various locations of the media components. The primary outline of the administration is made of these elements: The Atlanta Board of Education, the Superintendent and the Superintendent's Cabinet, made up of the Comptroller, Associate and Assistant Superintendents, and Area Superintendents.

The line organization of the administration would appear like this:[32]



There are four Area Superintendents and six Assistant Superintendents in charge of these central services respectively: Instructional Planning and Development, Student and Community Services, Personnel, Research and Evaluation, Administrative Services, and Facilities Services. One of the main changes that took place in this form of decentralization is to remove all line control from the central offices. This still appears to be a conceptual problem for people from centralized system in terms of interfacing with decentralized systems--in many situations, central offices cannot speak for the schools, individually or collectively. Nor can any one central office direct or control activities where implementation is on an area or building level without going upward to the Superintendent for the directive, or cooperation from the Area Superintendents.

From looking at this chart, one would find it difficult to locate

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[32]"New Administrative Organization," Connection, November-December, 1978, p. 4

the central operations of media services, and indeed there is no one location. Whether by design or by evolution, media is not perceived structurally within the Atlanta School System apart from its function--there is not structural justification for the existence of media apart from the specific educational, curricular, or administrative support role it plays. Therefore it will be necessary to describe the media components as a network or operational system itself within the decentralized administrative system, and then attempt to describe the processes of interaction between these components.

We mean by network, the communication system made up of nodes, or transfer points located in various agencies (components) of the system linked by interconnecting channels. These components may be located in various geographic, and administrative divisions and subdivisions, or on various administrative levels.

MEDIA SERVICES AND A DECENTRALIZED MEDIA NETWORK

Since the 1960's there has been a sense of unity in purpose in the informational or media components within the Atlanta Public School System. In the sense that "library resources" and "media resources" are understood as synonymous terms, the philosophical and conceptual problems of how books are separated from audiovisual media, at least on a system level, are not meaningful. Both terms are used interchangeably within the system to refer to the same components, by and large without confusion or conflict. Therefore there does exist within the structure what might be observed as anachronous position titles, e.g. area level "Resource Librarians" and building level "Media Specialists." Evidently there has been no systematic retitling of job positions other than those changes influenced by state certification. I can find no evidence of problems arising from this situation; the jobs appear to be understood clearly with the full range of services and materials both by the individuals performing these tasks and those counterparts both vertically and laterally arranged in the media network.

Components of the Media Network

The media resources and services for the Atlanta Public School System are not only administratively decentralized, but they are also structurally distributed. That is, major components of media responsibility are located in a variety of divisions rather than under a single administrative unit. This has dramatically effected the sense of decentralization in the level of middle management at least with respect to the media functions. It appears

as though the current structure and processes have evolved from the decentralized administrative structure rather than by administrative design. This is indicated by the fact that not only the documents of general outline and planning, but the memoranda and other in house documentation fail to perceive the actual linkages and network shape the media components have taken on. In fact, almost all documentation and planning assumes or implies centralized control and management of media resources and services.[33] Most probably it is the influence of the primary models which we currently have access to which leads to the assumption that organization and management implies administrative line relationship, and that similar and linked functions need, if not physical proximity, organizational proximity.

To get some idea of the distribution of media functions within the Atlanta System, besides the area offices and the comptroller, five of the six assistant superintendents have components (not all of which are even matching in hierachical equivalency to each other, some being on divisional level, others office level, and some staff level) with direct media resource and service functions. The following outline[34] will attempt to present representative components listing the superintendent's office as the heading and the immediate supervisory line prior to the component.

AREA OFFICES

Among the area staff are Area Resource Librarians, one serving each respectively. They serve as representatives of the Area Superintendents as coordinators of area programs and liason and support for the building level Media Specialists. The Area Resource Librarians work with the Area Resource Teachers in coordinating and implementing the instructional program on a area level.

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[33] See Gil Tauffner, "Design for Learning Resource Center Complex," Draft TS, July 13, 1965; Walter Bell, "Learning Resource Center, Draft TS, circa 1966-67, and others.

[34] Adapted from "A Representative Listing of Present Media Services Components By Branch and Division," a supporting document to the working paper, "Considerations Underlying a System Media Services Plan," by Gil Tauffner, December 10, 1976.

Three of the areas have planetarium programs with facilities and staff.

On the building level are 137 full-time media specialists who devote their time to media programs in a single school and 11 who serve more than one school. Fifteen of the media specialists have Sixth Year degrees, ninty-five have Masters, and thirty-eight have Bachelors with minimum media training for certification as their highest professional training. There are also 31 full-time and 3 part-time clerical aides. All 135 schools have media centers.[35]

OPERATIONS BRANCH

Besides the area operations, there are other components of media services which report to the Associate Superintendent of Operations:

Follow Through
  Artist
Post Secondary and Adult Education
  Commerical Art
  Instructional Development Center
  Media Specialist
  Librarian
  Curriculum Specialist
Public Relations
  Librarian
  Commerical Art

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Under the direction of this Assistant Superintendent are these components:

Learning Resources
  Textbook Services
  Professional Library
  16 mm Film Library
  Braille Library and Special Education Materials
  Media Processing Center
  Media Production Services
  Media Resource Librarian
  Media Exposition
  Media Utilization and Training

Central Supply Services
  Purchasing
  Media Acquisitions (Building level
  Electronic Repair--Distribution
  Property and Inventory
  Warehouse Services
Central Services
  Publications

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Under this Assistant Superintendent are these components:

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35 Georgia Department of Education, "Instructional Media Questionaire for 1977-78," Atlanta Public School System, TS (DE Form 0555, Revised January 1978), p. 7.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (Continued)

Program Development
  System Media Utilization
  Art Resources
  Science Resources
  Reading Resources
Educational Telecommunications
  Instructional Radio
  Instructional Television

FACILITIES SERVICES
  School Planning
  Electronic Services

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Research Assistants
  Learning Resources Center Evaluation Statistician

COMPTROLLER

Computer Center
  Audiovisual Booking and Distribution
  BATAB (Media ordering system in conjuction with Baker and Taylor)

STUDENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Special programs which involve the community directly will have some relationship with this unit. Programs such as volunteers, summer reading, etc. will have relationship with this unit and other media resource components.

Although this list does not pretend to be inclusive, it does present most of the major components from building to central levels which have direct relationship to media services and resources. But it does not give any indication of the relationship of operation to operation or the processes which tie these different elements together. It should be noted that they are not related to the administrative structure; there is no way the office in charge of media utilization can directly supervise any production needed for any training project, nor can those supervising a selection meeting control the process of acquisition. With such lateral relationships divided into a number of different divisions, rather than control, the management process becomes one of linkage and coordination.

In the original blueprint for the organization structure for the Atlanta System[36] the importance of this coordination function was stressed. All of the organizational charts have components which have never been fully realized. The first set are the community input advisory units (councils and committees) on each of the three levels--central, area, and building. This proposal, had it been systematically implemented would have moved the Atlanta System more toward the citizen participation form of administration which was described earlier. There are some advisory roles performed on each of the three levels, however they are not regular, tending more to serve special needs, and their reality and usefulness are entirely dependent upon the administrator with whom they must interface. The second set of structures recommended to allow operation of the decentralized system are councils/committees of individuals representing the various components of similar and related functions from the different administrative units. What was not provided was a mechanism to give such units authority for decision-making nor real input into the decision-making process. In any even there was not systematic implementation of these councils/committees below the cabinet level.

What has been the mechanism for operation is one of human link. The individuals within the system, at least on central level, have enough time in service as to know who does what rather than the individual positions filled. By attacking problems through informally bringing the needed components together, there has been a remarkable degree of operational consistency through times of extreme stress, flux, and ambiguity of directions.

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[36]Atlanta Study Council, op. cit., pp. 28-38.

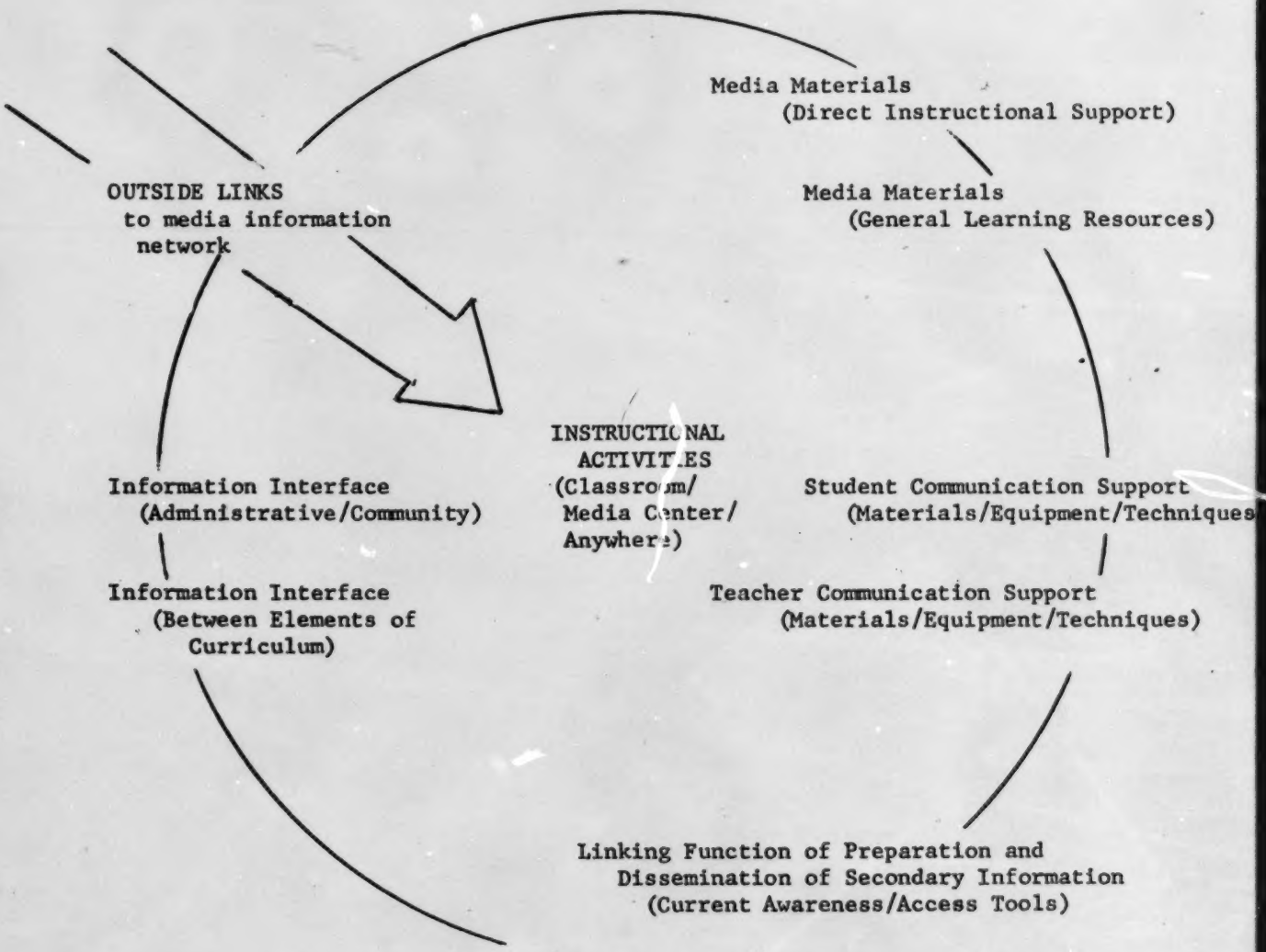
To give some idea of this information flow, let us examine the information systems on each of the levels and indicate the possible links inside each level as well as those links between levels.

Media Information Systems

The first level to be examined is that of the building level. In the Atlanta Public School System the central hub of this activity is the media specialist and the media center. Collectively the building level media specialists have a broad perspective of their job and their media programs; individually the implementation of such concepts are strictly dependent upon the media specialist's initiative, the principal's experience and understanding of the role of the media center, and his/her interpretation of area and central office policy. This is not to imply that the classroom teacher cannot prevent a successful media program on the building level; it is just that for all their good wishes, without the cooperation and encouragement of the principal, in a decentralized structure particularly which leaves the principal as central authority on the building level, there cannot be an effective media program. For the media program to operate outside the media center and have a general impact on curriculum, the cooperation of the classroom teachers is essential.

The following diagram will give some indication of the information flow within the building level. Because there is often conceptual misunderstanding of the role of the media specialist (the most common one is "they don't teach, they keep the books and av" or a vague understanding that they control purchasing of many materials the teachers would like to have, etc.), there are many contacts and links employed by teachers which

BUILDING LEVEL - MEDIA CENTER INFORMATION SYSTEM



by-pass or short-circuit this system. As was mentioned before, the terms media, media specialist, library, librarian, etc., did not appear to create confusion in role or function by the professional media staff on all levels and that the various terms tended to be used interchangeably. But this does not appear to be true when non-media people become involved. The labels and jargon apply to the specific limited contact the teacher, administrator, or other staff member has had with an individual with that title. There does not appear to be a single image, positive or negative, of that unit of the school. This ambiguity, which perhaps is useful for the professional media person, becomes a handicap when interfacing with other instructional components.

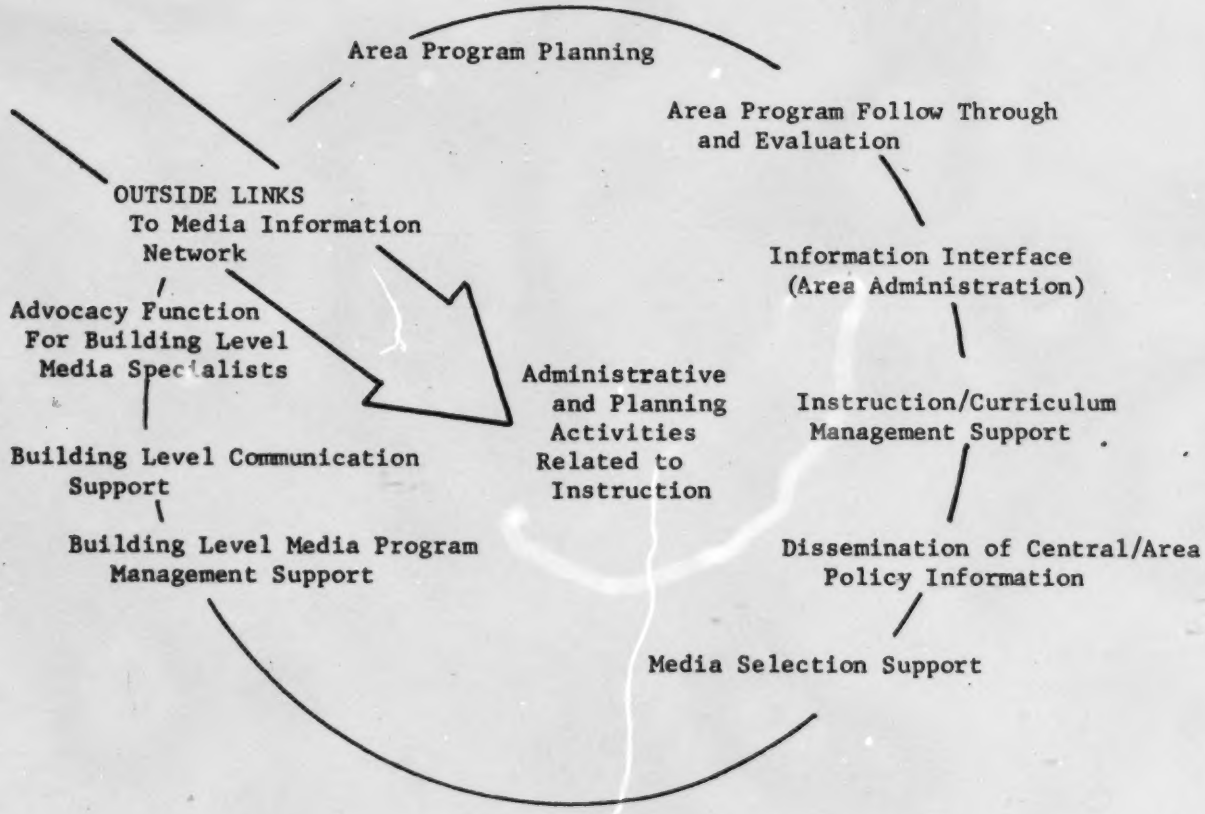
Since the schools vary so in size and complexity, only a general outline of nodes, or points where information is received and/or transmitted would be accurate. The most important node for specific instruction might be considered the teacher; from this point information is channelled to the students collectively or individually and from this point, individual or collective needs of the students can be channeled to appropriate sources. There would appear to be three types of nodes which must be considered for the information network: human, both individual and corporate--that is people such as lead teachers, principals, and individual classroom teachers as well as leadership teams, department committees, etc.; location nodes--these nodes represent places of information such as gymns, laboratories, classrooms, media centers, etc.; and media nodes--items, machines, or systems which function as primary information transfer points, such as televsion, telephones, computer terminals, charts, directories, etc. Consciously or unconsciously, the successful media specialist

understands the variety of nodes within the building level and brings each node into play by channeling to it the information to be transmitted. Certain types of these nodes are, of course, outside the direct control of the media specialist, then coordinating and advisory skills must be used. Other than the highest building level administrators, the media specialist is the only person who has access to a total perspective of that school's curriculum and the interaction of the instructional components.

The degree to which the previous description is perceived and implemented has 135 different variations in the Atlanta System, one for each of the schools. What is important is that this expanded role of the media specialist in curriculum planning and implementation, as well as instruction and methodology, is not outside the policy of the Atlanta Public School System. And as we shall see, it is implied in the structure and interfaces of instructional components as we examine other levels.

The area information system serves in primarily two arenas: the area level with primarily area staff, and the building level in primarily support functions. Almost all functions with relation to building level personnel are extensions of the Area Superintendent, however the authority is not line, but coordinative; the principal has line authority over building level media specialists. The following diagram will indicate the elements of the area level information system. The primary nodes on the building level with which the Area Resource Librarian has interface are primarily human--building level media specialists and principals. The primary nodes on areal level are their own Area Superintendent and the Area Resource Teachers. There is an inter-area relationship between the different Area Resource Librarians and the central media staff; formally it is with permission of Area Superintendents; in practice, it is a highly

AREA LEVEL - MEDIA INFORMATION SYSTEM


Area Program Planning
Area Program Follow Through and Evaluation
OUTSIDE LINKS To Media Information Network
Information Interface (Area Administration)
Advocacy Function For Building Level Media Specialists
Administrative and Planning Activities Related to Instruction
Instruction/Curriculum Management Support
Building Level Communication Support
Dissemination of Central/Area Policy Information
Building Level Media Program Management Support
Media Selection Support

interactive group of professionals interchanging ideas and supporting one another individually and collectively. Procedures for formalizing this interaction will be discussed later, but the most frequent, recognized inter-area node is the corporate meeting of the Area Resource Librarians with the Coordinator of System Media Utilization. In a centralized system this central level coordinator would have line control over the regional or area coordinators, however not in this decentralized structure. Rather they are off different limbs of different branches of the administrative chart. Nevertheless they meet, discuss, make decisions, and implement policy and programs. As all systems ultimately do, and decentralized

systems in particular must recognize, it is not the administrative structure which works; it is individuals understanding what must be accomplished, coordinating priorities, and designing and implementing plans of action to actually peform the needed tasks in the required amount of time. The formal processes, particularly in a system the scale of Atlanta, may be very cumbersome and indirect, but the informal information flow makes actual accomplishment possible.

The central information system is not a single system, but rather three or more. Since it is serving a decentralized system where one philosophical concept which is present is to have as much decision-making and activities performed as close to the learning situation and pupil as possible, the central offices have roles which serve the classroom teacher and student directly--for example, with the optically scanned audiovisual request forms, the teachers can book films and other audiovisual materials directly, and be informed as to comfirmation the next morning. This by-passes the reference and advising role of the building level media specialist in many cases, but it does offer the advantages of an efficient, rapid, and consistent process. (Current problems with this system as well as other similar structures serving the building level from the central offices, with reduced funding, demand is exceeding the resources available.) The information system of central offices with regard to media specialists on the building level include all the services and functions for classroom teachers, plus a coordinative role system-wide. Regular meetings of primary and secondary school media specialists deal with changes in system level services, policies, or procedures, general in-service training in skills and concepts, current awareness of new materials for selection for building level collections, and regular contact with central level subject

resource personnel, as well as central level media related staff. Another important component of these meetings is the forum provided for feedback and problems related to central office services provided to the schools. This mechanism operates outside the framework of components presented in the outline earlier.

The regular interaction between the Area Resource Librarians and the central staff has been briefly discussed earlier. The primary contact is in the form of the Media Leadership Team linking field operations with curriculum and instructional planning. This informal structure is the primary unit of the current network of the central offices media operations. It is composed of the System Media Utilization Coordinator, Director of the Learning Resources Department, Media Services Selection Coordinator, Learning Resources Department Resource Librarian, and the four Area Resource Librarians. This group evolved out of the need for coordination in planning as well as operation of media support to the instruction program in the Atlanta Public Schools. However important its role in the actual accomplishment of tasks, clarifying system problems, and facilitating other units in the performance of their roles, there is no formal leadership capability from this unit within the current administrative structure, since this group does not collectively report, but rather as individuals report for the group to the members' various cabinet level administrative officers. Futhermore, as can be observed from the outline of components in the media network, there is a broad range of scattered services not represented in the Media Leadership Team membership. The need for a broader forum has been perceived by this group, and as necessary, incorporated broader membership for specific purposes. It is interesting that this kind of structure, that is a committee, council or team comprised

of representatives of different departments which deal with specific areas of concern was recommended in the initial decentralization plan.[37] Such units as the Curriculum Council, Pupil Personnel Council, etc., although not a media council, were designed to provide direct, collective, and regular input to the Superintendent's Cabinet. As has been pointed out before, these units never materialized.

In the summer of 1977, the Media Leadership Team recommended that a broad-based Media Services Task Force be appointed to work with the Leadership Team.[38] The Division of Research and Evaluation recommended, following the 1977 evaluation of the Departments of Learning Resources and Educational Telecommunications, that a system wide media services plan be developed. From both of these directions, the Assistant Superintendent of Administrative Services and the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Planning and Development jointly authorized an Ad Hoc Committee chaired by the System Media Utilization Coordinator to present recommendations for a system wide media services plan. Structurally this committee has problems. It is reporting to two different assistant superintendents. Furthermore, a number of people who can provide important information as members of the committee report to various other assistant superintendents, who, even if they understand the importance of the committee, may not see the role of their staff in the process.

The committee has had little time to be thoroughly evaluated. From the meeting reports of 1978, it appears to be identifying the areas of need, concern, and interpreting the interaction of the various components

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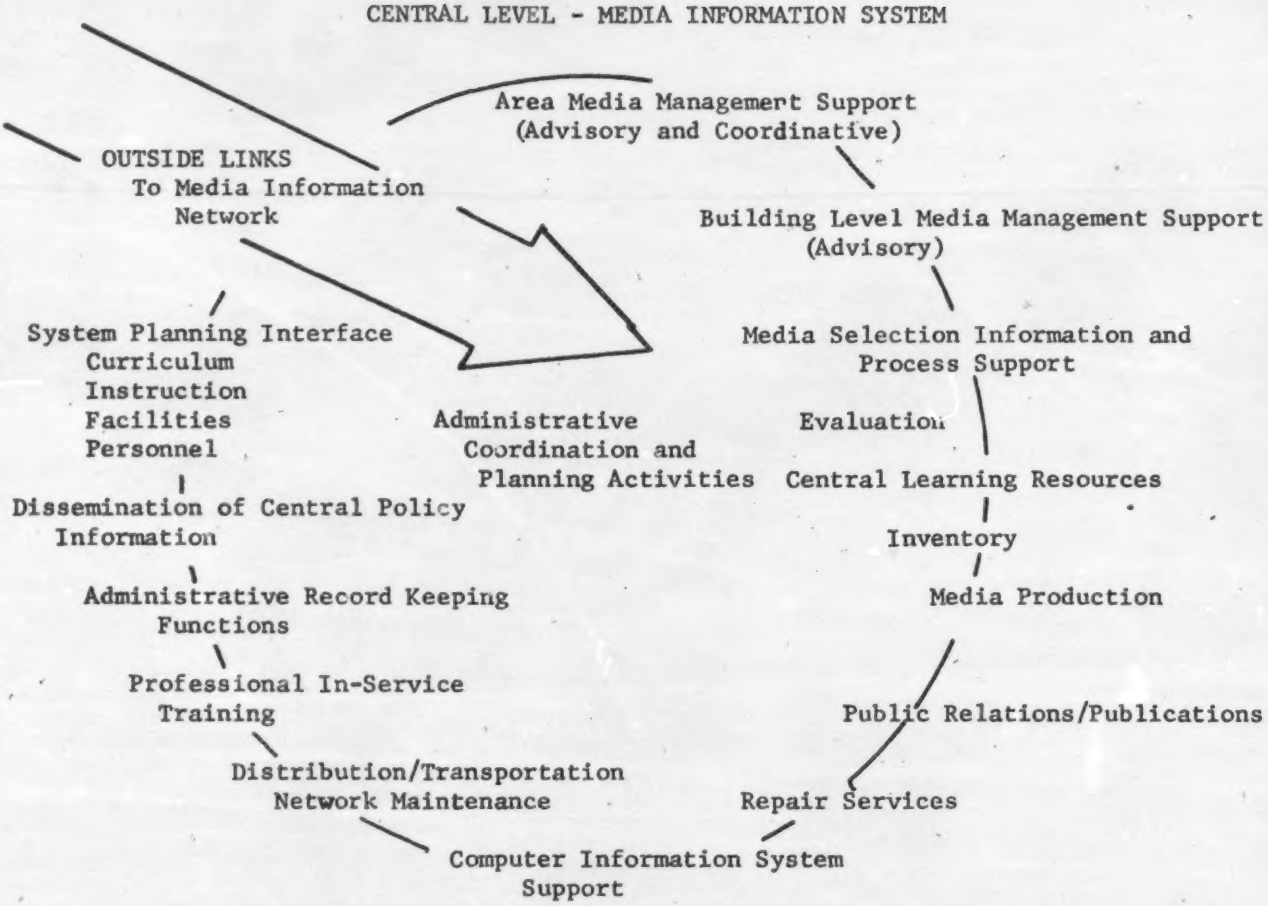
[37] Ibid., p. 29.

[38] "A Summary Report of the Educational Media Workshop Conference Held Under the Auspices of the Division of Educational Media Services of the State Department of Education." August 9-11, 1977, Macon Hilton Hotel, Macon, Georgia



acting as a total system or network.[39] But we will look in more detail at the limitation of this unit and the direction it can take in the final chapter of this study.

The diagram of the Central Level Media Information System is much less successful a representation of the scale of operation than the previous diagrams of the area and building level systems. But it is hoped that the diagram can indicate the complexity and interrelationship that exists between the

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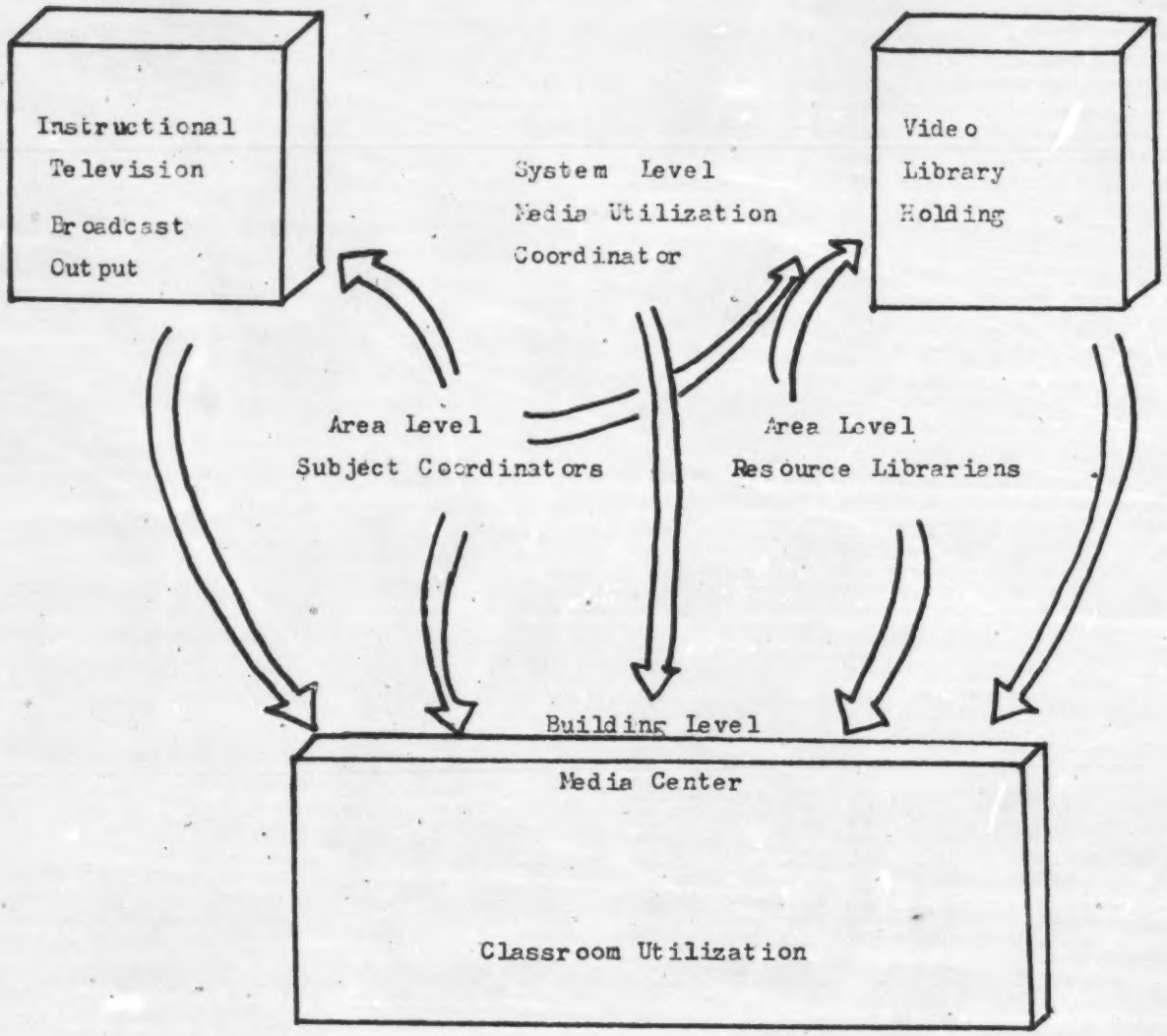
[39]Blake, Dorothy, Chairperson, "Ad Hoc Committee on Media Services Progress Report," TS, 1978, and other committee documents.

functions, each of which may be performed by a combination of administrative units operating sometimes independently, sometimes in tight cooperation.

Problems and Future Directions

The total operation of the variety of components is not a single channel network. Even on the building level and area level there are a number of different routes to arrive at the same information. To give some idea of how a variety of routes exist within the process, let us look at only one type of information and map out some of the possible access lines. The following diagram refers to the access to instructional television programming for a classroom function. On the Building level these possibilities exist: the class time may match the broadcast time and the class simply watch the program in the classroom or in the media center; the program might be taped on the building level in the media center for use by the teacher at the appropriate class time; the program could be booked on videotape from the central library directly by the teacher; the videotape could be booked by the building level media specialist for the teacher. The information contact about the program could have come to the classroom teacher through the building level lead teacher or media specialist; from an area level Subject Coordinator; or to the building level media specialist through the Area Resource Librarian; or from the System Media Utilization Coordinator directly or at a system media selection meeting. The need for the programming could have come to the instructional television station from individual building level staff, area level staff or central staff; the need for the Learning Resource Center to tape the program for its library can also come through any of those routes. And these are certainly not all the operational lines that could, and in similar information flow situations, do come into play.

Illustration of Simultaneous Multiple Paths of Information Flow



This redundancy, which in a tightly centralized system would be waste and most probably not permitted in system policy, is not only a necessity in a decentralized system, but perhaps one of its strengths. Rather than having to fight a person or a policy when a channel breaks down for whatever reason, there is usually another way to arrive at the same objective. And it is this back up capability which makes such a decentralized system work; to classical centralized structure analysis, the system would appear as chaos and absurdity, in practice there always is a way to get a task done.

But coordination is where efficiency comes into play. And efficiency will become more and more important as the system continues to contract. The statistics presented on the decreasing enrollment are grim. To continue operating as a decentralized system, and more importantly as a distributed system on the central level, efficiency must be increased. To do this must be a greater level of information concerning the media system/network directly to decision-making level--that is cabinet level. One recommendation would be to have a media council with direct, collective, and regular input to the Superintendent's Cabinet or directly to the Superintendent. This would have much greater long range possibilites than such traditional suggestions as creating a department or division level unit and place all media components there. Media Services do not exist with some intrinsic value apart from their function in education or communication--school media centers serve no function if they are not used.

Another serious problem existing in the Atlanta System, and existing in almost all school systems, is the failure of teachers, principals, area resource teachers, area superintendents, and central staff who are not directly part of the media network, to understand the role of media personnel

in the educational system. Whatever the cause of this conceptual lacuna, there appears to be room in all types of administrative structures for public relations and in-service training of what the system's professional staff can do to support the teaching--learning environment.

CONCLUSION

The literature of school media administration, particularly those which are revised works of the 1950's and 1960's, provide no guidelines for operating within, and certainly no help for managing decentralized administrative structures. In fact, the organizational charts and concepts are in strong philosophical agreement with tightly centralized, controlled systems. The day of decentralization, to say nothing of orbital, participative, or committee management, has not yet dawned. In a few of the newer texts[40] there is some mention made of decentralization, but other than definition, little substantial information is presented, particularly what the operational implications might be. The current guidelines[41] assume a centralized, and unified media program--not decentralized and distributed.

What is hoped that this study has done is to lay some groundwork, outline the broad areas of needed research and theory, with regard to the media program within decentralized and distributed administrative systems. Furthermore it is hoped that it also outlines a conceptual framework for others to examine the Atlanta Public School System in more detail, or organize an approach to case studies of other systems.

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[40] For example see James W. Brown, et. al., Administering Educational Media (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972) particularly chapters 2 and 3; Warren B. Hicks and Alma M. Tillin, Managing Multimedia Libraries (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1977) pp. 35-37.

[41] American Association of School Librarians and the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Media Programs; District and School (Chicago: ALA, 1975)

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